

THE OUANANICHE & ITS CANADIAN ENVIRONMENT.



BY
E.T.D. CHAMBERS.

FROM far above the Grand Falls of the Hamilton River, and from the waters of its Ashuanipi branch in the interior of Labrador, came the skin of a fish that unfolds a novel and interesting story to anglers and ichthyologists alike. In its adipose fin the fish whose skin this was wore the badge of royalty amongst fishes—the evidence of kinship to the kingly family of the salmon. In its shapely beauty and brilliancy of coloring, from the deep bluish-green of its back, through the various shades of its silvery sides, to the pure white of its under surface, and in the number and disposition of its fin rays, it scarcely differed from a grilse of equal size. But its habitat was above a cataract having a sheer fall of 300 feet, so that this fish could not possibly have been a salmon from the sea. The large number and the distinctness of the xx marks upon its sides, the large size of the eye and of the dark spots upon the gill-covers, and the strength and thickness of that portion of the body adjoining the caudal fin, all stamp it a *ouananiche, or fresh-water salmon of non-anadromous habits. Prior to the discovery of this fish in several of the large streams of the extreme northern and eastern river basins of Labrador, by Mr. A. P. Low, of the

Geological Survey of Canada, who brought this skin back with him to civilization upon his return from his overland trip of 1894-5 to Ungava Bay, the ouananiche was popularly supposed to be peculiar to Lake St. John and its tributary waters. Now its Canadian environment is known to include the whole Labrador peninsula, excepting perhaps that part of its westerly slope drained into Hudson Bay; and the angler who would find it, and fight it under the varying conditions in which it may be found, must traverse a vast region of mountain and lake and forest and stream as practically unknown as the interior of Africa, save to the Montagnais and Nascapsee Indians, whose hunting-ground it is.

The earliest spring fishing for ouananiche is to be had in Lake St. John. The railway ride of 190 miles thither from the city of Quebec carries the tourist through one of the most fascinating regions of Northern sport, and across the entire belt of the Laurentian Mountains, which thousands of years before Noah's ark grounded upon the summit of Mount Ararat, or the fiat had gone forth which first shed created light upon a world of chaos, lifted aloft their hoary heads, white with the snows of a thousand years. Most of the stoppages made along the greater part of this railway line are mainly for the accommodation of fishermen belonging to the different clubs of sportsmen, whose club-houses are sometimes the railway stations, and the headquarters of private

* Those acquainted with the pronunciation of "ouananiche" (whon-na-nishe or wannanishé), and who recall the fact that "ou" at the commencement of similar French words is given the sound of "w," will understand why I use the article "a" before it instead of "an."

preserves, of 200 to 400 square miles each in extent. Ouananiche have been planted in some of these preserved waters, and brook trout abound everywhere. Marvellous stories are told of the monster *fontinalis* that inhabit the deep cold waters of the lakes and streams of the Triton, the Lake Edward, the Nomantum, the Metabetchouan, and the Batiscan systems. Five and six pound specimens are not rare in either of these, and occasionally eight-pounders are taken. The brilliancy of their coloring has drawn from Kit Clarke the declaration that "God never made a more beautiful object." An English magazine writer has said of the same fish, "Never have we seen such gorgeous and brilliant coloring in any finny crea-

ture, except perhaps in some of the quaint tropical varieties from the Caribbean Sea, which are shown to the traveller by negro fishermen in Jamaica." In gameness this beautiful trout is excelled in its Canadian home by the ouananiche alone. From its lair beneath some lily-pad or under the shadow of an overhanging tree or rock, often within the margin of heavy rapids, where the floods clap their hands in frolicsome glee, the leopard of the brook has had his attention directed by some peculiar motion of a somewhat remarkable fly at or near the surface of the water. At the moment the insect makes a dart, as if to escape alike from his observation and his reach, it is seized by him with a rush which in velocity excels the motion of the cast as it is about to be withdrawn from the water. If essential to success, this mad dash is not infrequently terminated by a leap into mid-air and on to the apparently vanishing hook. He is a valiant foe, a stand-up fighter, as it were, who takes no surface lure by stealth, not even from below, but flings himself boldly into the contest, generally exposes himself to full view quite early in the fight, and never yields an inch of ground, or water, or line, until compelled by sheer exhaustion, nor is finally conquered until he has employed the thousand and one devices of his plucky persistence, bold, brave battling, and finny *finesse*. Even when apparently quite exhausted, and drawn unresistingly on his side upon the top of the water to the very margin of the angler's canoe, the sight of the landing-net inspires him with new life, and he must needs be a deft and experienced guide who is not often overmatched in the wild dash for life and liberty of a large trout's final struggle at the apparition of the net. This is the *fontinalis* of cold Northern waters, as I know him and esteem him, and as thousands of Canadian and American anglers know and esteem him too.

Many a time these trout are taken in this Lake St. John country two or three



JACQUES-CARTIER RIVER TROUT.

at a cast. I have known of two being taken at a time where only one was hooked. It was in the middle of September, and I had struck what subsequently proved to be a very handsome female fish, in condition the very pink of perfection. As my rod was light, less than five ounces in weight, and the fish both heavy and strong, I had rather thoroughly exhausted my trout before attempting to bring it to net. To provide against the success of a possible final plunge, I had gradually conducted my quarry into a narrow opening running some distance between two low ledges of rock, upon one of which stood my guide, net in

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ON THE JACQUES-CARTIER.

hand, ready for the closing scene of the struggle. Then for the first time it was seen that there were two trout instead of one in the little creek or bay into which I had towed my fish. But only one was fast to my line. With a dexterous sweep of the net, the guide secured, not in the first instance the fish that had taken the fly, but a handsome red-bellied male, whose persistent accompaniment of the securely hooked female into shallow water had rendered him apparently oblivious of the danger into which he was running. And as I reflected how much like men these fishes are, there came into my mind these capital lines of the late John Boyle O'Reilly:

"'What bait do you use,' said a saint to the devil,
'When you fish where the souls of men
abound?'
'Well, for special tastes,' said the king of evil,
'Gold and fame are the best I've found.'
'But for general use?' asked the saint. 'Ah!
then,'
Said the demon, 'I angle for man, not men,
And a thing I hate
Is to change my bait,
So I fish with a woman the whole year round.'"

The incident naturally recalled, too, the exhaustive treatment accorded the loves of the fishes by Oppian in his *Halieutica*, which can scarcely be opened at any page without serving to remind us how much more was known of some departments of ichthyological science seventeen and a

half centuries ago than the busy world of to-day has time even to attempt to investigate.

The whole of the uninhabited interior of the country between the Saguenay River and the railway running from Quebec to Lake St. John has been reserved by recent legislation as a national park for the preservation of forests, water-supply, fish, and game. Permits to fish and hunt therein are issued under the direction of the Hon. E. J. Flynn, Commissioner of Crown Lands, to whom is due the credit of initiating the plan of this splendid reserve of 2831 square miles of territory. Its scenery is most picturesque, much of it very closely resembling that of the Little Saguenay, so renowned for its wild grandeur. The Jacques-Cartier is one of its most beautiful rivers, and here, and in its tributary the Sautoriski, are to be had some of the grandest fly-fishing and best caribou-hunting in Canada. The voracity of some of the uneducated trout of these streams is almost incredible. Fishing the Sautoriski not long ago with a friend, one on either side of the narrow stream, we were fast to fish within a few seconds of each other. It was not very long before it became patent that we had both hooked the same trout! It proved, when taken out of the water, to be a fine female fish of nearly a pound in weight. The flies it had taken had been a Professor and a

Brown Hackle. "Whose should she be in the general counting up of our fish?" was a question that might well have occurred, for we both had her to fight. But my friend let out line enough to enable me to lead the fish upon a gently sloping shoal, and we divided its well-fried flakes at our breakfast a half-hour later.

Fishing for ouananiche with rod and line in Lake St. John commences as soon as the ice leaves the surface of the water, which is usually about the second week of May. Not many better directions can be given for angling for the fish in the lake itself than some of those contained in the quaint instructions for catching salmon by the author of *Barker's Delight, or the Art of Angling*, to whom good old Father Walton was indebted for most of the little that he knew of fly-fishing and of artificial flies. Few fish are taken out of the lake, however, by fly-fishing. Scarcely anybody but the settlers of the vicinity trouble the ouananiche at the season of the year when they are most plentiful

there, and their fishing is rather for food than for sport, like that attributed by old John Dennys, in his remarkable *Secrets of Angling*, to Deucalion, whom he credits with the invention of the art for the benevolent purpose of supplying food after the flood to the newly peopled earth:

"Since foode there was not any to be found,
For that great flood had all destroyd and
drownd.

"Then did Deucalion first the Art inuent

Of Angling, and his people taught the same;
And to the woods and groues with them hee went,
Fit tooles to finde for this most needfull game;
There from the trees the longest ryndes they rent,
Wherewith strong lines they roughly twist and
frame;
And of each crooke of hardest bush and brake
They made them hookes the hungry fish to
take."

The methods and angling appliances of the Lake St. John *habitants* recall the fisherman

"Whose angle rod was made of sturdy oak;
His line a cable that no ship e'er broke;
His hook was baited with a dragon's tail;
He stood upon a rock and bobb'd for whale."



INDIAN GUIDE.

Fly-fishermen visit Lake St. John in the latter part of May to whip the pools in the mouths of the Ouiatchouan and Metabetchouan rivers—southern feeders of the lake. Here the sport, though uncertain, is often fast and furious, but only in the early spring. In August there is good angling in the Metabetchouan three or four miles from its mouth, at the foot of its picturesque falls. The Ouiatchouan pool, on the other hand, affords neither summer nor autumn fishing, and at present it is in private hands. None who have visited it can ever forget the beauty of its surroundings. On the one hand the broad expanse of inland sea, a hundred miles in circumference, into which its waters pour; on the other, a background of prettily wooded mountain but a mile away, over which the water that you fish has been poured in a sheer dip of 236 feet. The falls rival in altitude those of Montmorency, while they far surpass them in the distribution of their waters, as they are lashed into foam by projecting points of rock. “Ouiatchouan,” in the Montagnais dialect, means, “Do you see the falls there?” This cataract may be seen from many miles around, and from every part of the lake, and has given to the river its name. For the greater part of the intervening mile between the falls and the ouananiche pool at its mouth, this river rushes through an extremely narrow gorge with such violent velocity that it reminds one of the Ausable Chasm.

The most exciting form of ouananiche-fishing is to be had in rapid Northern



OUIATCHOUAN FALLS.

rivers or in the restless waters of *la grande décharge*. In the latter, the fly-fishing commences about the 10th of June, and is at its best until about the 15th of July. The delta-shaped island of Alma divides the discharge of Lake St. John into two main channels. The principal attractions for the angler are furnished by the larger of the two, which is for the most part a succession of heavy rapids, separated by thousands of islands of different dimensions into as many channels of varying size. Most of these rapids are exceedingly beautiful, and not infrequently they



IN THE LAURENTIDES NATIONAL PARK.

strike with such violence against a projecting point of mainland or island that only a portion of their waters continues along their downward course, the remainder being hurled in a heavy current up the stream, in apparently open defiance of every law of nature governing a rush of water. Thus side by side may be seen contrary currents of violent velocity, the upward rush of the one being little less decided than the downward roar of the other.

Sometimes the water, that dashes with such seeming yet determined unnaturalness up over opposing ascents, rushes, with an eddying swirl that gives rise to a treacherous whirlpool, back into the embrace of the parent rapid, from which it had become temporarily separated by the same apparently eternal and external impetus that for ages may continue to play shuttlecock with some of its constituent elements. Some distance below these exciting scenes, and often also after the heaviest *chutes* of *la grande décharge*, where the rapids cease from troubling and the waters are at rest, there is an oily smoothness over the surface of the reposing fluid, whose only motion is a measured yet very perceptible heaving of the water, as of the breast of some sleeping Venus, whom the angler may almost fan-

cy, from the natural beauty and grace of the surroundings, is about to rise from the pool beside him, as in the *Anadyomene* of Apelles. Immense quantities of foam, churned up by the rapid succession of violent falls, are continually floating down the various currents of the stream in different-sized patches, either round and round a particular pool or from one pool to another, according to the nature of the currents that come from neighboring rapids, and from the effect of projecting rocks and points of land. When and where this foam, or *brou*, abounds, is usually to be had the best fishing for ouananiche. It is the aim of the guides, who with such consummate ability paddle the angler through the rushing, whirling, seething rapids of *la grande décharge*, to bring the birch-bark canoe, in which he is seated, near to the edge of the scum-covered eddies, dotted with insect life, where the hungry ouananiche lies in ambush below, waiting to spring upon his prey as soon as his favorite fly floats around. Very often the fish sail about so close to the surface of the water that a number of dorsal and caudal fins may be seen moving through the creamy scum that has come down from the overflowing churn of yonder rapids. To quote Mr. A. Nelson Cheney, State Fish-Culturist of New

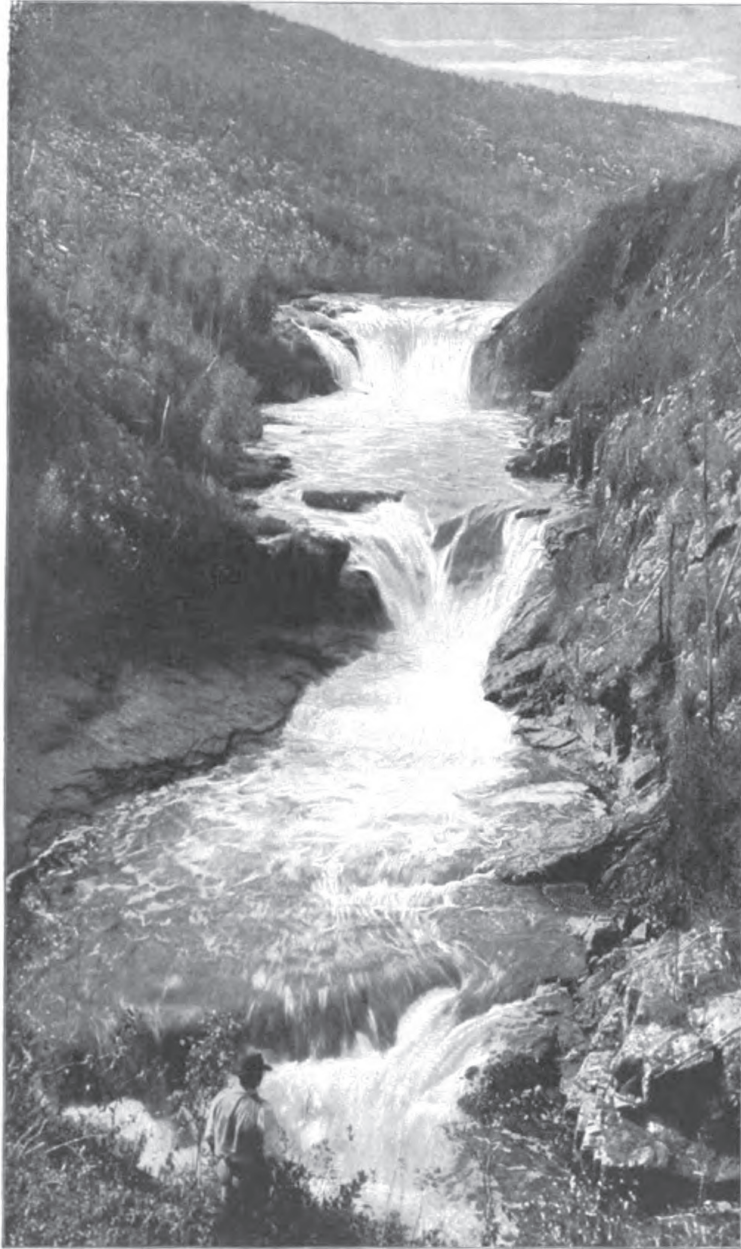
York, who fished the discharge with me in August, 1894, "the thick foam is a natural trap for weak-winged insects, where the ouananiche have only to go and take the contents." Under such conditions a well-directed cast of a Jock Scot, Silver Doctor, General Hooker, Brown Hackle, or Professor, or any two of them together, will seldom fail of a rise, and occasionally there will be a couple.

In these waters, in the latter part of June the ouananiche is about at its best in point of gameness. In the vicinity of such rapids the fish can know nothing of the life of indolence and luxurious ease that conduces to enervation and effeminacy. The very excitement and unrest of their surroundings render inactivity impossible to them, while the physical exertion necessarily employed in their constant struggles amid the mighty forces of those turbulent waters insures for them the possession of that courage, agility, and strength that make them the recognized champions of the finny warriors of Canadian fishing-grounds. A well-hooked ouananiche is by no means the spoil of the angler until he is not only grassed or taken into the canoe, but literally and absolutely killed. Almost before you have had time to wonder at the length of line that the fish is running from off your reel, a bright arched gleam of silver darts out of the water a hundred

feet away from your canoe, as suddenly as arrow flies from bow, and deliberately turns a somersault three or four feet up in the air. If you are a novice at the sport, or he has taken you unawares, you may never see him more. If he managed by his superior dexterity and cunning to get the slack of the line, he probably shook the hook from his mouth and is free. If, in your excitement, you gave him the butt too quickly, you perhaps tore the hook out of his delicate mouth. Or, matching his agility and strength against the endurance of your casting-line or the pliability of your trusty rod, he has made shipwreck alike of your tackle and your happiness. Sometimes his leaps are made in such rapid succession that you are fighting your fish alternately in air and water. At others, if he be a large fish, say four to eight pounds in weight, as those taken in the discharge quite frequently are, he goes down and sulks like a salmon from the sea. His different methods of defence indicate that he possesses the combined *finesse* of the salmon and the bass. When impaled upon the hook, he has occasionally been known, in the course of his prodigious leaps, to alight in the bottom of the angler's canoe. Of his aerial somersaults, Lieutenant-Colonel Andrew Haggard, D.S.O., has written, in his charming introduction to the *Book of the Ouananiche*: "Such is his elasticity,



THE LITTLE SAGUENAY NEAR ST. RAYMOND.



FALLS OF THE METABETCHOUAN.

the India-rubber, gutta-percha, racket-ball nature of his backbone, that he resembles Rudyard Kipling's description of our dear, well-remembered foeman the 'Fuzzy-Wuzzy' of the Soudan. Like that Haddendowah Arab, the ouananiche is distinctly an 'India-rubber idiot on the spree.' Even when you have got him in the landing-net he will at times bound out of it again."

Because of the difference in the nature of the sport afforded by the ouananiche of Canada and the so-called landlocked

salmon of Maine and other American waters, and also because of their different life histories, there are not wanting those who claim for each of them the honor of a distinct variety. But Agassiz, in 1875, examined the ouananiche with Boardman and Putnam, and declared it to be identical with the so-called landlocked salmon of Maine, and Garman has made similar comparisons, with the same result. As to the different habits of the two fish, there is little doubt that the rapid waters inhabited by the ouananiche give it the activity and combativeness that constitute a greater measure of gameness, while the exceedingly low temperature of its habitat is responsible for the fact that in its Canadian environment it is, unlike its Maine congener, a surface feeder all the summer through.

There are those, again, who, because of its want of anadromy, insist that the ouananiche possesses varietal distinctions from the salmon that runs out to sea. So Piscator, in the *Complete Angler*—the

same who tells us that pike are bred of pickelweed—is made to say of a supposed large trout, "Whether this were a salmon when he came into the fresh water, and his not returning into the sea hath altered him to another color or kind, I am not able to say." And many modern Waltons find no difficulty in deciding that different habits alone constitute a different variety. Ichthyological science, on the other hand, as represented by Professor Garman of Cambridge, Massachusetts, says, of the attempt to establish



MOUTH OF THE RIVER SAUTORISKI.

class differences between the salmon and ouananiche. "Similar distinctions would make a different variety of the men in a crew out on a voyage returning with modified complexions, or a new species of those going out smooth-faced and returning with whiskers."

Since the construction of a railway to Lake St. John has made one corner of the Canadian environment of the ouananiche accessible to sportsmen, this fish has so frequently been treated of as a new discovery that we are apt to forget that the Jesuit missionary De Quen, who visited Lake St. John in 1647, found the ouananiche in its clear waters, and correctly classified it as a salmon. To quite a number of ardent anglers in recent years, nevertheless, it has undoubtedly proved a new variety; and many a lost salmon-fly, many an escaped fish, many a smashed fishing-rod and parted casting-line, have testified to the lack of judgment that marked a first conflict between angler and ouananiche. Worsted in the contest, many a fisherman has no doubt appreciated the sapience of the accomplished fly-fisher's

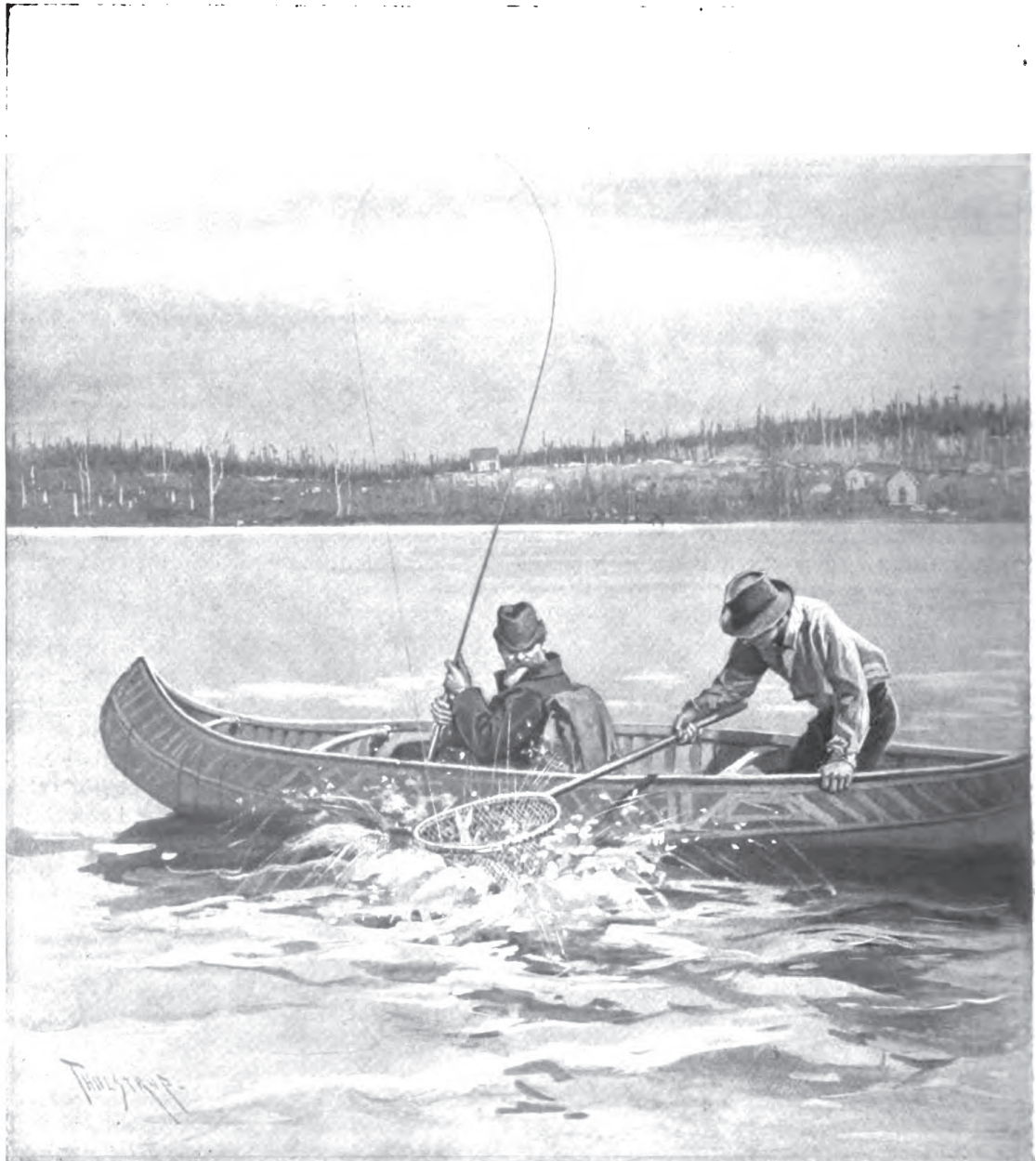
remark in *Salmonia*, placed in the mouth of Halieus by Sir Humphry Davy, in his description of the imaginary fishing party angling for the hucho salmon at the falls of the Traun, in Upper Austria. "When we are ardent," says Halieus, "we are bad judges of the effort we make; and an angler who could be cool with a new species of salmo, I should not envy."

Even the most superficial observer amongst ouananiche fishermen will have remarked that the same general lines that form the contour of shapely beauty for the Naiad of the angler—the most symmetrical and most beautiful fish that swims—producing a form most admirably adapted to rapid motion, even against powerful currents, by the regular tapering from the front of the dorsal fin both to the snout and to the tail, and by the nearly equal convexity of back and belly, are common to both salmon and ouananiche. But the ouananiche of *la grande décharge*, and equally rapid waters elsewhere, is an even more graceful, more active, and more athletic fish than the visitor to other streams from the sea, and is con-

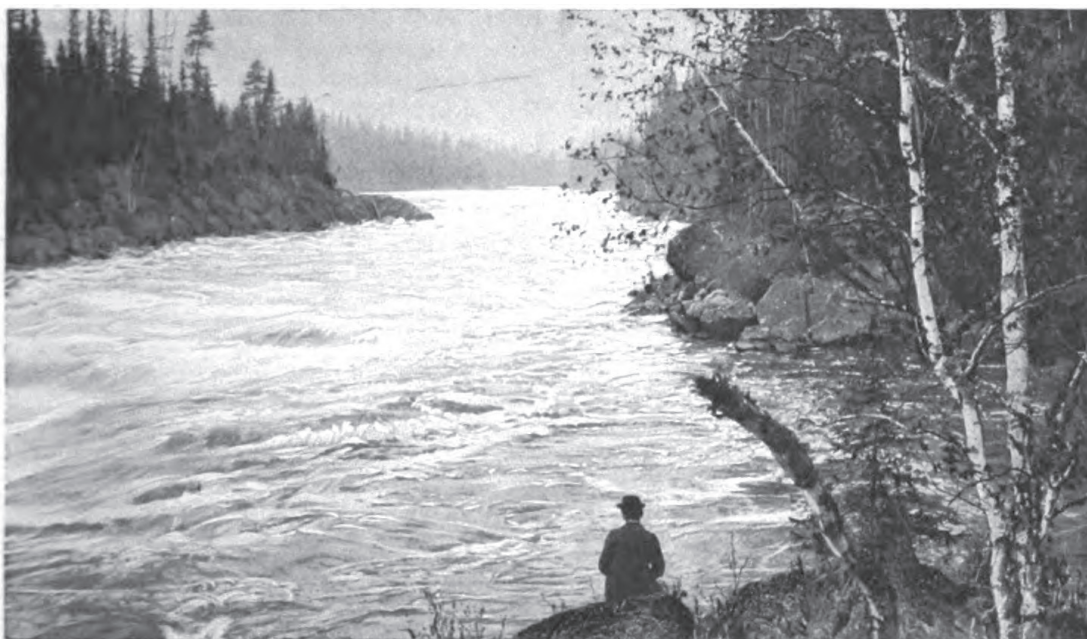
sequently somewhat longer and slimmer in shape. The beauty of its coloring, when found in rapid water at the spring of the year, is no less striking than its graceful proportions. It is clothed, indeed, in purple and finest silver, and no doubt fares sumptuously every day. In its various hues it reflects every shade of its natural surroundings, from the indigo-colored storm-clouds to the rose tints of the setting sun, from the purple haze over the distant hills to the pale green foliage of the bursting buds, from the darkest views of the deepest holes that it

frequents—the olive and bronze of the floating water-weeds and the gray of the surrounding rocks—to the silver sheen of the moon-beams, the white-topped rapids, and foam-flecked eddying pools.

A number of fanciful theories have been advanced to account for the genesis of the ouananiche, its supposed development, according to some authorities, or deterioration, according to others. Apparently the most popular of these is that which pictures a school of salmon prevented from returning to the sea after a summer excursion to Lake St. John, by a



NETTING TROUT.



CASCADE OF PERIBONCA.

supposititious impassable barrier at Chicoutimi, caused by an equally imaginary upheaval of nature in the bed of the Saguenay. Thus imprisoned above, they have, according to this theory, become landlocked salmon, or ouananiche, degenerated in size only from their original progenitors. Others again suggest that the ouananiche are descendants of enterprising salmon from the sea, which, well satisfied with the depth of the waters and the abundance of food in the Saguenay, concluded to secede from their oceanic domain, and remaining in their congenial environment, founded a kingdom of their own. There is more ingenuity in this theory than in that of imprisonment or landlocking, for it does not, like the other, presuppose conditions, the non-existence of which is patent enough to anybody who will take the trouble to visit the locality in question for the purpose of investigating. But it has little else than this ingenuity and its novelty to recommend it, and must be immediately abandoned when inquiring into the case of ouananiche in the inland waters of Labrador, some of which, like the specimen already described, have been found above the Grand Falls of the Hamilton River, which have a direct drop of 300 feet. Mr. A. P. Low, of the Geological Survey of Canada, who caught them there, says, in the course of a letter contributed by

him to *The Book of the Ouananiche*: "I do not know what the theories are regarding the occurrence of these fish in inland waters. But of one thing I am certain, and that is, they have never ascended from the sea to their present haunts since the close of the glacial period, and I hardly think the conditions were favorable then. My idea is that the salmon was originally a fresh-water fish, and acquired the sea-going habit." Many other men of science, and notably Professor Samuel Garman, of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Cambridge, Massachusetts, are one with Mr. Low as to the original habitat of the salmon, holding that it was in the beginning but a fresh-water fish, which has since acquired the habit of wandering from the crystal Eden in which it was created, into the salt wilderness of the sea, by its acquisition of a taste for the flesh-pots of the briny deep. Some specimens through all their generations have retained their fresh-water habitat; but from choice rather than necessity. These are the ouananiche of northern Canadian waters, the so-called landlocks and *Salmo salar* (variety *Sebago*) of Maine and other American lakes.

The fish that rise to a surface lure in the end of May and the first half of June, as described in the account of the angling in the Ouiatchouan and Metabetchouan pools, and in *la grande décharge*, take

the ordinary salmon flies. The water is so dark-colored and high that small ones would not be so clearly seen. Charles Kingsley was an advocate for large flies at all times, believing that the larger the fly, the larger the fish. This looks

or, Queen of the Water, Reuben Wood, Hare's Ear, or General Hooker.

In the hottest and clearest weather of the short hot Canadian summer it requires, indeed, all one's skill to entice the ouananiche; and then, too, as Mr. Creigh-



POLING UP THE CHIGOBICHE RIVER.

quite reasonable, so long as the gay deceit is not of sufficient size to frighten the fish or excite its suspicion. The Jock Scot, Silver Doctor, Green Drake, Grizzly King, Seth Green, Professor, and Coachman, that are used in such large sizes for this earliest fishing, must be gradually reduced in size, even in the last days of June, as the water grows clearer and lower, and the temperature both of the air and of the water becomes higher. In the latter part of July the ouananiche in the pools of the discharge of Lake St. John has become an epicure. He wants the daintiest of flies, and wants them in small sizes, too. If two flies are used, the tail one may be a Silver Doctor or Jock Scot tied on a number eight hook. The dropper may be an equally small Profess-

ton puts it, "If you understand the fine art of dry fly-fishing, and can manœuvre a tiny dun on a twelve or thirteen hook so as to look like the real article, and can also handle large fish on the fine tackle required, you will get good sport, and the satisfaction which comes of catching fish as Reynolds mixed his colors—with brains." It does require brains, and experience as well, to handle the ouananiche upon the exceedingly minute hooks and delicate gossamerlike gut that is employed upon Loch Leven and other Scotch trout waters.

The trout of Loch Leven, introduced by Sir Walter Scott into his story of *The Abbot*, and picturesquely described for us by Dr. Knox in his *Fish and Fishing in the lone Glens of Scotland*, has

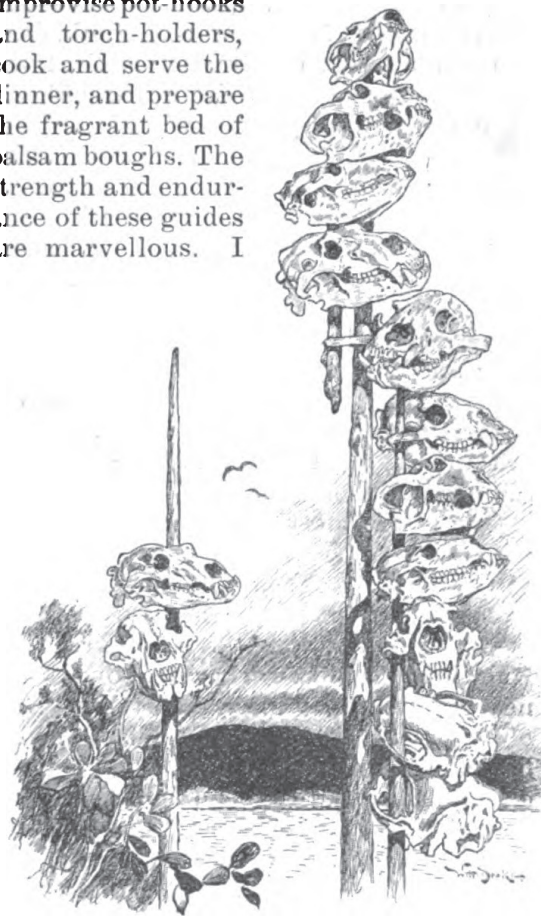
many points of resemblance to the ouananiche. Dr. Quackenbos, of New York, who has both fished for it in its old home and introduced it into some of the American waters, differs from those who believe it to be a landlocked salmon, and holds it rather to be a landlocked sea-trout. But this theory does not detract from that of its resemblance to Canada's fresh-water salmon, for Lieutenant-Colonel Andrew Haggard, who has angled for both ouananiche and Scotch sea-trout, has placed on record his belief that these two are practically identical.

The best summer fishing-grounds for ouananiche are in the large northern feeders of Lake St. John—the Peribonca, a noble stream, over two miles wide at its mouth, and nearly 400 miles long; the Mistassini, very little inferior to it in either length or volume; and the Ashuapmouchouan, which has its source but a comparatively short distance south of Big Lake Mistassini. The methods of angling in these rivers do not differ much from those followed in *la grande décharge*. But ouananiche are only taken in their rapid water, or at the foot of their many heavy falls. Their smooth-water stretches, those of the Peribonca in particular, swarm with monster pike; and while five to fifteen pound specimens may always be counted upon by trollers, either in the river itself or in Lake Tschotagama, fifty miles up from its mouth, pike of forty pounds and upwards have been taken from them. In August, 1892, above the eighth falls of the Peribonca, I witnessed a struggle between Colonel Haggard and his guide, on the one hand, and a pike that nearly rivalled in length the paddle of the canoe, and that finally broke away, after the two men had labored hard for several minutes to lift it into their birch-bark craft.

All the *chutes* of these big rivers have to be portaged. Many of the rapids are shot upon the downward trip, and the sensation of the descent is certainly a thrilling one. Colonel Haggard assures me that the cataracts of the Nile are not comparable at all for wildness and danger with these cascades of the Peribonca, and hence the wisdom of the British War Department is made apparent in having sent to Canada for *voyageurs* for service in Egypt.

It is by no means necessary, in making the descent to Lake St. John, to return by

the way one ascended. The whole country is a perfect net-work of lakes and rivers. By making very short portages it is possible to paddle up any one of the northern feeders of Lake St. John and down any other. The routes of intercommunication are almost legion. The camping and canoeing tours in these wilds may be therefore indefinitely varied. Many of the lakes and smaller streams are well supplied with trout, as well as with ouananiche. Here the birch-bark canoe finds "a smoother highway," says Murray, "than Rome ever builded for her chariots." The Indians who furnish and propel the canoe, also make the tent-poles, pitch the tents, cut firewood, light and tend the camp-fire, improvise pot-hooks and torch-holders, cook and serve the dinner, and prepare the fragrant bed of balsam boughs. The strength and endurance of these guides are marvellous. I



BEARS' SKULLS.

have known them to carry over 300 pounds of baggage each over a portage. Only perhaps in the management of their canoes in heavy rapids are they more wonderful than in their portaging of canoes and provisions. The sensation as the frail craft glides with almost imperceptible velocity

down a steep incline of smooth water or dips into the hollow of a great sea is exciting in the extreme. Now it seems that the crest of a huge wave is about to break over the side of the canoe; the next instant the birch bark is lifted sideways out of the hollow. Then again the bow is apparently upon the point of being submerged, when the canoeman in front cuts off the head of the breaker with his paddle. Here, in a very dangerous place, where two currents violently collide, or in the very vicinity of a whirlpool, the guides, resting upon their paddles, hold back the canoe in the middle of a heavy rapid, until a propitious moment approaches for darting by the temporarily averted danger. There, both men are struggling for very life, straining every muscle to wrench the canoe out of a current that would dash it upon a rock, or force it against the treacherous smooth rapid that would carry it down over yonder waterfall. For a while they make no headway. The canoe even appears to be losing ground. Even for the bravest it is an exciting moment. No swimmer could struggle successfully against that awful tide. But one false stroke and all would be over. Experience and endurance triumph in the end; and never yet, when the instructions of these Indian guides have been followed, has any serious accident occurred to angler or tourist in the Canadian environment of the ouananiche.

One of the most picturesque scenes on any of these rivers is at the fifth falls of the Mistassini, some twenty-five miles from its mouth. Here a heavy volume of water, more than three hundred feet wide, is hurled in a vertical fall over rocks nearly thirty feet high. In the months of July and August, good fly-fishing may be had for the ouananiche which congregate in the beautiful pool below the falls on their way to their spawning-grounds above. Few occurrences in the life histories of these fish are more interesting than their method of surmounting these difficult falls. They cannot, of course, leap the entire cataract at a bound, but they certainly do it in two. Half-way up the falls, at one side, is a ledge in the rock, containing a pond some seventy feet in circumference. It serves as a fish-ladder for ouananiche. Often they may be seen darting upwards through the descending water of the curtain fall, sometimes successfully gaining the midway pool from

the stream below, or the head of the upper fall from the half-way resting-place: at others falling short of their high endeavor, and back again into restful water to acquire new vigor for renewed effort. Ouananiche occasionally rise to the fly in the small deep pool half-way up the fifth falls, and have been known, when hooked there, to throw themselves, in the course of their somersaults, down to the foot of the cataract, in their effort to escape. The Mistassini is supposed to have been so called from the mistaken belief that it was the outlet of Lake Mistassini. Now it is well known that the surplus waters of that inland sea are poured by the Rupert River into James Bay. The name Mistassini signifies big rock, and is from the Indian *mistahe* and *assini*. It was applied to this body of water, which is over a hundred miles long and some fifteen wide, from an immense boulder upon its margin. The Montagnais Indians believe it unsafe to look at it while crossing the water, since to do so is certain to agitate the surface of the lake and raise a dangerous storm.

The most direct route from Lake St. John to Mistassini is by way of the Ashuapmouchouan. Though involving the ascent of some very long and violent rapids, it can be covered, under favorable circumstances, in about three weeks. Many of these rapids, both in the Ashuapmouchouan and the Chigobiche rivers, can only be poled, two Indians to each canoe, one standing up at either end, and forcing the birch bark up inch by inch. In many of the waters near the height of land, on the other hand, there is often difficulty in floating a loaded canoe at all.

A curious spectacle often seen in this country of the Montagnais is a number of bears' heads threaded upon a pole. I formerly supposed that this is simply to show other Indians that bears are to be found there, or to keep the skull beyond the reach of dogs, but one who knows the Indians well, believes that it is to honor the animal and propitiate the spirit of its kind. Sometimes the heads of beavers, and even of pike, are found so treated.

When Messrs. Low and Eaton crossed the interior of Labrador to Ungava Bay, they first made their way to Lake Mistassini, and then ascended the East Main River to its head-waters, whence a perilous course led to one of the feeders of

the Caniapuscau. Following this to its junction with the main stream, the party descended the latter to its mouth, several hundred miles below. In one of the rapids Mr. Eaton's canoe was wrecked, and most of its contents lost. These rapids are almost continuous for over two hundred miles. There are also a number of direct falls of considerable grandeur, and four cañons where the river narrows and rushes through steep rocky gorges. One, which was named Eaton Canyon, descends with a fall of thirty feet into a gorge varying from thirty to a hundred feet in width, with perpendicular and in many places overhanging jagged rocky walls, that rise three hundred feet above the rushing torrent below. This gorge is about a mile and a half long, and terminates with a fall of a hundred feet into a circular basin, where the water is all churned to a foam. From this basin a narrow channel leads into a second and larger one, thirty feet below, into which the river precipitates itself in a decreasing series of enormous waves.

Most of these waters contain ouananiche, and all furnish a habitat for various other species of fish, particularly pike, white-fish, and trout. The Hamilton, to which reference has already been made, is probably one of the most richly stocked rivers yet discovered in this north country. Salmon ascend it for twenty miles from its mouth. Ouananiche are plentiful in its upper waters. The contents of a single catch in a small net included *Cyprinus forsterianus* (red sucking carp), *Coregonus clupeiformis* (common white-fish), *Salvelinus namaycush* (great lake

trout), *Salvelinus fontinalis* (brook-trout), and *Esox lucius* (pike). Mr. Low declares that above the Grand Falls there is to be had the finest trout-fishing in Canada. All the fontinales taken here by his party were large fish. None were under three pounds in weight, and some weighed seven. Plenty of them are to be had in all the rapids. Below the Grand Falls the fish are plentiful, but smaller. An angler can easily take, in a few hours, more than he can carry away. Fishermen for ouananiche in their Canadian home have often done so. The true sportsman kills only what fish he can use, returning all others to the water. When, on the other hand, it is a well-known fact that from fifty to a hundred ouananiche per day have been killed, as well as landed, and that to a single rod, there is need indeed of some more powerful deterrent from shameful waste than the sweet, sportsmanlike appeal contained in the "Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle," attributed to Dame Juliana Barnes, or Berners, in the following tender words: "Alfo ye fhall not be to rauenuous in takyng of your faid game as to moche at one tyme: whyche ye maye lyghtly doo yf ye doo in euery poynt as this prefent treatyfe fhewyth you in euery poynt, whyche lyghtly be occafyon to dyftroye your owne dyfportes and other mennys alfo. As when ye haue a fuf-fycyent mefe ye fholde coveyte nomore as at that tyme. . . . And all thofe that done after this rule fhall haue the bleffynge of god and faynt Petyr, whyche he theym graunte that wyth his precyous blood vs boughte."

PRÆTERITA.

BY MADISON CAWEIN.

LOW belts of rushes ragged with the blast;
 Lagoons of marish reddening with the west;
 And o'er the marsh the water-fowl's unrest,
 While daylight dwindles and the dusk falls fast.
 Set in sad walls, all mossy with the past,
 An old stone gateway with a crumbling crest;
 A garden where death drowns manifest;
 And in gaunt yews the shadowy house at last.
 Here, like some unseen spirit, silence talks
 With echo and the wind in each gray room
 Where melancholy slumbers with the rain;
 Or, like some gentle ghost, the moonlight walks
 In the dim garden, that her smile makes bloom
 With all the old-time loveliness again.